



THE
TULL
POWTER
LIBRARY

0.775 D 23742.427

TEN YEARS OF MINISTRY IN CHICAGO.

AN ANNIVERSARY SERMON

PREACHED TO

THE UNION PARK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
CHICAGO, ILL.,

BY THE PASTOR,

REV. FREDERICK A. NOBLE, D. D.

SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 21, 1889.

"And He brought the shadow ten steps backward."—II Kings, xx, 2.

In a ministry of almost thirty years there remains to me the experience of preaching what is technically called an anniversary sermon. When these seasons have come round there has always been present to my thought the example of Albert Barnes. He waited until he had reached three-score before he ventured to indulge at any length in personal reminiscences and to review his own work in the pulpit. Some men are eminently skillful on such occasions, and without any apparent indelicacy or egotism, and to the evident gratification and profit of all concerned, they can talk freely of what they themselves have done, and of the share they have had with others in promoting interests and bringing about results which register progress in the Kingdom of Christ. Other men do not succeed so well, and I have always had what I can but regard as a wholesome dread lest I might prove to be of the latter, rather than of the former number.

But while there is this shrinking and misgiving on my part, the point now reached, both as respects time elapsed and ends gained, is one which would seem to make it in every way fit, if not imperative, that something should be said about the good hand of the Lord which has been upon us, and the struggles and sorrows

through which we have passed, and the joys and triumphs into which we have entered, during the wonderful decade through whose succeeding months we have lived and wrought together.

It was ten years yesterday since I first took my place in the pulpit of this church. The morning was bright and beautiful, the congregation was large, and the Easter gladness of the Sunday before still lingered in the faces and voices of the people. The text of the discourse was a double one, consisting of the words of Our Lord: "Without Me ye can do nothing," and the words of the great Apostle: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." It is needless, perhaps, to say that in my own thought the emphasis lay upon the statement of Christ; for at that hour, weak and weary with the struggles naturally associated with breaking away, only a week before, from a people all of whom were well known and many of whom were tenderly beloved, and standing face to face with responsibilities which were realized to be of the gravest, but which were not yet measured, the fact that chiefly impressed me was not what any man, even the feeblest, may do through the accompanying wisdom and might of Him, but what a miserable and utter failure my own ministry would surely be without the constant presence and guiding grace of the Son of God. All the way through that feeling has been the predominant one, and it still is.

The changes and improvements which have been made in the material condition of Chicago during this period have been marked. Ten years ago the population was only about 500,000; now it is not far from 825,000. This is a marvelous increase in numbers. But the advance has been phenomenal in every respect. Miles upon miles of streets opened and put in order, broad and elegant boulevards constructed, parks enlarged and beautified, costly bridges erected, capacious and commanding depots made to take the place of temporary structures, buildings devoted to art and trade, along with matchless business blocks, and hospitals and school houses and churches and halls and hotels, and private residences unsurpassed in attractiveness by anything to be seen in the Old World, planned and completed in surprising numbers, new railroad facilities secured whereby the commercial advantages of the city have been largely increased, cable cars in successful operation, banks and bank capital and all sorts of mercantile and manufacturing enterprises greatly multiplied, many thousands of modest but comfortable homes turned over to the possession of

industrious and thrifty laborers in the outskirts—these are some of the particulars which help to measure the astonishing progress achieved by our city during the time indicated. With a single exception, all those massive and imposing structures which cluster about the Board of Trade building—the Board of Trade building itself included—and almost all those great stores along Market street in the vicinity of Adams, and about the intersection of Adams and Franklin and Fifth avenue, and those huge piles which seem reared for the ages, one sees on Michigan Boulevard going south from the Exposition building, and those splendid palaces which line the lake shore from the water works to the park on the north side, have sprung into existence within the last decade. Whole sections of the city have been reconstructed. Other whole sections have been occupied and improved for the first time. The extent and character of the developments will not fail to surprise any one who will let his mind run back and take in the changes which have occurred in the external aspects of Chicago within this limit of ten years; for without some strange magic-working power it hardly appears possible that there could have been such transformations in such a brief period. The wealth acquired by our successful business men in these years must have added enormously to their former gains.

If we look at the pulpits of several of our leading Christian bodies, one is equally struck by the changes which have come about. Dr. Goodwin, able, honored, beloved, self-forgetting and consecrated in his life, an associate and co-worker in whose fellowship all of us have found both joy and inspiration, laid aside for a little as he has occasionally been before through over-intensity and zeal in service, but pretty sure to come back again and take up his tasks with unabated enthusiasm, is still at the head of the First Church. Dr. Williams, who seems a part of everything that is good in Chicago, and whose name is identified with so many forms of work, and so many precious interests, and who meets all his responsibilities with a patience and fidelity to challenge admiration, remains the cherished pastor of the South Church. Rev. Burke F. Leavitt, than whom a purer and more unselfish man does not live, in the spirit of a devotion which takes no account of obstacles or difficulties, still leads the Lincoln Park people along many lines of aggressive and successful Christian activity. The Rev. William A. Lloyd, with a mind so alert and fearless that nothing objection-

able escapes him, and with a heart so tender and true that all who know him are drawn to him in loving trust, goes in and out at Ravenswood, holding forth the Word both by precept and example, in a ministry of almost twenty years in duration.

But these—so far as occurs to me now—are the only ministers belonging to our Congregational order here in this city and vicinity whose date of connection with their several churches extends back more than ten years. Evanston has had a succession of pastors. So has Oak Park and Hinsdale. The Plymouth Church has seen two ministers retire from her service since my coming to Chicago, and a third now fills the place of under-shepherd. The same is true of the Leavitt Street Church, and of the Tabernacle and of Bethany. The pulpit of the New England Church has been made vacant by the “translation”—I use exact ecclesiastical language—of Dr. Little, to Boston. It shows the rapid, and at the same time the healthy growth of our body that there is such a large group of energetic and consecrated men like Bird, of South Chicago, and Wells and Rood, of Englewood, and Adams, of the Warren Avenue Church, and Lloyd, of the California Avenue, and Brooks, of Western Avenue, and Bissell, of Lake View, and Dowd, of Winnetka, and now Skeele, of the South Park Church, preaching to organizations which ten years ago had not begun to be, or if they had, any of them, were existing only in the germ of some mission Sunday School or extemporized service.

In the pastorates outside our own denomination the changes in general have been quite as sweeping. Amongst the Reformed Episcopalians, Bishops Cheney and Fallows are still in the places they have long filled. But in the Presbyterian Church, not counting the United Presbyterians—one of whose ministers, the very efficient and earnest and faithful Dr. Meloy, is our near neighbor—not a single pulpit, so far as I know, in this whole community is manned as it was back in 1879. The First Church, the Second, the Third, the Fourth, the Jefferson Park, the Eighth, the Westminster, Memorial, and all the others, have said farewell to departing pastors and welcome to new pastors within this half score of years. In length of stay it is given to me to outrank them all.

Amongst the Baptists the state of things is quite similar. If we make a single exception, not a leading pulpit belonging to our Baptist brethren is filled by the same man who filled it at my coming to this city. Neither Lorimer, nor Henson, nor Lawrence, nor

Wolfenden has been ministering for this length of time to the people he is now serving. It is to be hoped these men will continue to stand where they now are for many a year to come; for they are strong men, and fitted to do valiant deeds for righteousness in the swirling tumult of our over-eager materialism and rampant wickedness.

It is a singular fact—perhaps, too, a significant fact—how many of the churches of this city and vicinity, outside of the Methodists, where these changes are a part of their polity, and inside Congregational and Presbyterian and Baptist lines, where there is supposed to be more stability, are now served, not by their second, but by their third ministers, since this decade began. The Congregationalists show the most stability.

The changes, however, which most concern us, and in which we may all be supposed to have a deep personal interest, are those which have occurred within our own organization, or which have been brought about, here and elsewhere, if not altogether, yet in part, through our own active participation as pastor or people, or both working together.

The improved outlook from the financial standpoint is one to awaken joy in all our hearts, and devout gratitude to Almighty God.

When I accepted the call to take up work here the debt on this property was \$58,000. This in itself, had it been without a history, could not have been considered very serious. A young, vigorous, thrifty and resolute people, not small in numbers, and determined to do what they may to help on the Kingdom of Our Lord, would hardly be expected to be much staggered by a sum no larger than the one just named, especially when so placed that the payment of it was to be spread out over a number of years. But the discouraging feature was that this amount of indebtedness was what was left after a long and arduous struggle to meet obligations much larger, and in virtue of which both the patience and the resources of the people had been heavily drawn upon. This made all the difference in the world. Besides, having reached a place where it was possible to rest without running any risk of losing the edifice, it was only natural that all concerned should want a good long rest. This was the most threatening aspect of the situation.

When men who have been toiling very hard—bearing the heat

and burden of the day—reach a spot where they can stop and sit down for a little, they find sitting down very sweet, and they are liable to remain sitting until—they catch cold. It is so with churches. When the members of a church have been making a hard and united effort to accomplish some desirable end, and have finally succeeded, the temptation is a very strong one to take a rest, and when once in the resting posture, to keep on resting till—they catch cold. We can all recall not a few distressing cases of this sort. So one can never be quite certain whether a successful endeavor in some church movement will mean subsequent lethargy and a long halt, or will be made, as it ought to be, the opportunity and inspiration of still worthier achievements. There is in this position always the peril of the dead point in mechanics. The question is how to get safely past it.

In this instance, the thing to be done, as it seemed to me, was to create a public opinion among us in which there should be a feeling of restlessness under debt in any shape or amount, and a consciousness of ability to go straight on and pay all we owed as soon as, or before, it should fall due. Whether what I said and did, as occasion served, had any influence in bringing about this state of feeling it is immaterial to consider. The gratifying fact is that this state of feeling was brought about, and under it all that immense burden was rolled off, and much sooner than some thought at all possible.

During my ministry we have had four distinct struggles with money raising in our own behalf. The first one was an effort to secure \$20,000 with which to anticipate the payment of our installment notes which were falling due at the rate of \$2,000 every six months. The amount actually secured for this end was \$21,300. The second one was to get \$11,000 with which to erect our Oakley Mission building. It took a deal of hard and wearisome trudging to do this, but the entire sum was at length got together. The third was to make the payment of the last and large note of \$33,500, which matured October 1, 1885. We all have vivid memories of those days and months of conferences and solicitations and statements and appeals, and of the joy felt and expressed in the success which crowned the effort. The fourth was during the past and present year, when it was found necessary to obtain \$15,500 to put the church, from circumstances beyond control long neglected, in a proper state of repair, and to make up deficits. This sum was raised.

Now, over against every dollar of indebtedness, which at the present time is only \$3,000, the trustees can show a dollar of subscription, and this money will all be paid over in due time.

Summing up what has been done in a financial way in the ten years now under review, we find, that for principal and interest and permanent improvements, including the Oakley Mission property, which is held in trust by this society, the Union Park people have raised \$105,000, or at the rate of \$10,500 a year for the whole term. This is over and above what has been raised on account of current expenses and benevolences, save as the Oakley Mission contributions may be considered benevolence. Surely there can be nobody to whom this will not seem a magnificent total.

This will be the more apparent when it is remembered that the Union Park congregation, if measured by the standard of some other congregations in this city, is not rich. Congregations could be named in which there are single individuals who could buy us all out. In no instance when we have been soliciting money for the several objects specified has there been a subscription rising above \$2,000. When we were securing money to pay the note of \$33,500, there were two subscriptions of \$2,000 each, and there was one family who gave \$2,500; but the sums needed never came in large contributions. The amounts required were made up because there were a great many who were ready to "lend a hand." At the outset of our financial efforts nobody has been quite able to see where the money needed was to come from; but it has come. It has come because there are so many who love this church, and who love the kingdom of Christ. Their subscriptions have meant love, and often love to the point of sacrifice.

In the first annual report published after my coming, the membership of the church was set down at 625. The last report makes the number 1,012. On the roll now there cannot be less than 1,025. Our net gain in membership for the ten years is about 400, or 40 a year. The total admissions for this period have been about 975. Of these, not far from 375 have been on confession of their faith. Somewhat more than 270 baptisms have been administered. Of those receiving this rite, a little more than 100 have been infants. So far as the record shows, 70 of our members have died. This low death-rate indicates—what is the fact—that our numbers have been made up largely of young and vigorous persons. In the

manual which covered the condition of things in 1879 there were 128 names in the absent columns. Last year there were 200 such names.

But of our present membership it ought to be said that 108 belong to our mission branches—79 to Oakley—a few more now—and 29—increased somewhat at the January communion—to the Ashland. While these are members of our church, and are to remain members until they are strong enough, each branch of them, to be set off by themselves, and have been gathered in in response to the faithful toils and the wise leadership and the loving sympathies of our mission workers, and are cherished by us all, they add nothing to our active or supporting force. Every member of a church may be supposed to increase its strength, and to lend some aid in meeting its obligations and carrying on its enterprises; but these, so far as all this goes, might as well be classed with the absent members. They meet their Christian responsibilities in their own field—some of them most faithfully and efficiently—but they are not in our home prayer-meetings; they are not in our home Sunday School; they are not pew-holders in our home church. This is said for the reason that we must not allow ourselves to think, nor permit others to think, we are stronger than we are. It would be a pretty large estimate to call our numbers actually here on the ground 700.

It is a special gratification that we know so nearly just who and what and where our people are. Pains have been taken in the admission of members to see to it that no unworthy person should find his way into our fellowship, and the roll has been closely scrutinized from time to time. Occasionally we have been deceived, or if not deceived, disappointed in the outcome, and those from whom we hoped good have gone sadly wrong. Last year, after as searching an examination as, under the circumstances, we were able to give the subject, 52 names were erased, under our rules, from our catalogue—some of them being simply dropped, while from others fellowship was withdrawn.

But along the line of numbers our growth has been steady and healthy. We have suffered from removals, and some who have gone out from us we could ill spare. They were men and women who were wise and faithful and true and patient and generous, with a heart and a hand for every good work; and so long as any who have ever known them remain in this communion, they will be sorely missed. At the same time, as our increasing numbers show, while

there has been this outflow in the current, there has also been a steady inflow. One-fourth of our Board of Deacons has come to us since my pastorate began. About 60 of the little more than 100 teachers in our Home Sunday School have come into our connection within ten years. This number includes some of our very successful Bible Class teachers. The Superintendent and more than half the officers of the Oakley Mission are among our accessions, while 21 of the 33 teachers working there fall into the same list. As much is true of more than half the teachers at the Ashland Mission. There is one whole department of our work—that of the Gospel Temperance League—which is carried on entirely by those who have joined us inside of the last decade. Our present list of pew-holders is considerably larger than the first one published after my pastorate commenced, which was in the Manual for 1882.

This, in general, is a statement of our numerical gains. There is nothing remarkable in these gains. But when it is remembered what a long and serious hindrance to anything like rapid advancement our debt was, and how many people were fretted and irritated by the constant menace of it, and how much we have suffered of late by removals from our division of the city, and how unattractive our house of worship was for a long time, until, indeed, this recent renovation made it one of the most beautiful in the city, or in the land, it is a showing which has many elements of highest encouragement in it for all who love the Union Park Church.

Passing now from what lies on the surface of things, to what is more vital and spiritual, it occurs to me to say that the standard of Christian life and activity and obligation has been carried forward very decidedly in this church during the last ten years. Please do not understand me as claiming that there were no men and women in this fellowship ten years ago who had high conceptions of Christian life and duty, and were moving along on a high plane of consecration. Far from it; for there were not a few whose ideals of discipleship were lofty, and whose daily walk was close with God. Better Christian men and women than were many of those found here ten years ago I never expect to see on earth. Please do not understand me, either, as affirming that all who are at the present time in our membership have as exalted notions of what following Christ means as may easily be gathered from a thoughtful reading

of the New Testament, or are living such exemplary lives as is becoming in those who have for their constant aim to be like Jesus.

What I mean to say is, and what I feel justified in saying, is, that, on the whole, there has been a marked forward movement all along the line, and that the banners are higher up on the wall, than they were at my coming. There is a more pervasive sense of personal obligation to Christ, and a higher estimate of the privilege of fellow-citizenship with the saints. There are relatively more who are cherishing devout aspirations; and in our aggressive work, in our giving, in the members who have personal identification with some form of Christian activity, in appreciation of the forward world-movements of our faith, and in the sympathies felt for those who are toiling for the Master here and there and everywhere, and, above all, in our common thought of what the inner life of one must be who would be successful in his own growing in grace, or in winning others to God, there has been an advance hardly appreciable by one not in position to note its successive stages.

Were this not the fact I should feel that my ministry here had had very little justification. For this, more distinctly than anything else, has been the one purpose I have kept before me—to lift this whole Church into a heartier confidence in the doctrines of Jesus Christ, and into a closer intimacy with Him in all the on-goings of the life. This has seemed to me the pre-eminent thing to be done here—to aid in increasing the faith of men in Christ, in drawing out the love of men to Christ, and in making men like Christ.

After beginning work in Chicago it took but little examination into facts and tendencies to discover that there were certain influences in operation in this community not wholly favorable to strictness of faith, or strictness of life.

Liberal opinions on all the leading doctrines of Christianity were exceedingly popular. A man on a platform, or through a newspaper, or in a pulpit, had only to speak of creeds in terms of disparagement to draw about him a large following. If one did not say anything even, but simply shrugged his shoulders in a significant way, and looked wise, when references were made to doctrines, he was sure of a backing not otherwise to be commanded. In the common thought of large circles, breadth of view, intelligence, a progressive spirit, manliness, independence in the use of one's

faculties, were associated with loose views on all the fundamental truths of revealed religion. Recent events in the ecclesiastical world had filled the air with these notions, and every new-comer to any pulpit was watched, and estimated favorably or unfavorably by numbers surprisingly large from his attitude on these questions.

This church and congregation felt these influences. This was easy to see. But there was no debate in my own mind as to the attitude I should take. Naturally progressive, naturally in sympathy with every flash of new light which comes in on the world, by early training and subsequent affiliations thrown into the liberal wing of the church with which I was identified for fourteen years of my ministerial life, there has never yet been a moment in my career when I stopped to discuss the question whether I should yield to the whim of the hour and go with the crowd, and gain thereby a little temporary popularity, or should stand fair and square and fast by what seemed to me to be the truth of God. Hence the path for my walking was open and clear. I said to myself: "If these whose drift is away from the great facts of a personal Creator, and the sinfulness of sin, and the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the vicarious atonement of Him who died on the cross, and future retribution for wrong-doing, are to be held to the faith of the Son of God; and if those in danger of coming under these misleading influences are to be kept in fidelity to the great evangelical conceptions of the gospel, then the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus, must be unhesitatingly proclaimed." To me there seemed to be no other course for one who believes that men are to be saved and built up in righteousness through faith in Christ.

The results of this policy are before us. In consequence of the position taken by me, some are not with us who otherwise would have been with us. Some, too, are with us who otherwise would not have been with us. Be this as it may, however, there has been no double-dealing, and no equivocation about it. Everybody has known just where to find us—pastor and people alike. We mean—all of us—to be liberal. We mean—all of us—to be catholic in the best and broadest sense of the term. We think more of life than we do of doctrine. We think more of Jesus Christ, and of right personal relations to Him, than we do of anybody's theories about Christ. But we are not foolish enough, and we do not mean to be persuaded into being foolish enough, to imagine that the foundation

can be destroyed and the superstructure remain intact. Any belittling, any disparagement of the great and living truths which cluster about Calvary will react, sooner or later, in moral disaster.

Then, as was intimated, there was a disposition abroad to adopt somewhat free and easy standards of Christian living. I did not come to Chicago without considerable experience in the ministry. I had been in St. Paul, in Pittsburgh, and in New Haven. I had seen the inside of church life in Presbyterian circles and in Congregational circles; in the East and in the West. But somehow the impression made on me after a little observation of things, was that, while there were large numbers of men and women belonging to the church in Chicago who were sincerely and intensely in earnest in their Christian activities, devout, circumspect, self-sacrificing, and in the highest degree loyal to the Master, there were yet too many—somewhat more than in some other places—whose theories of following Christ did not appear to interfere with their adoption of the methods of the world in matters pertaining to gains and pleasures and habits in general. It was evident there were some in this church, as well as in other churches about us, who did not put any very marked emphasis on their Christian duties and obligations. They were Christians who meant to get on in their Christian living without submitting to the inconveniences of much self-denial or sacrifice. We are not yet wholly over this. There are still too many who count the vows they have taken upon their souls to live lives consecrated and loyal to God, to be the least binding of all their vows, and who yield to the besetments of gain, or the wooings of ambition, or the fascinations of pleasure, and rush on with the popular currents as they set outward from God in the world.

But while this is true, it is also true that the numbers really of us who are of this way of thinking are not so large as once. People who want to be members of a church, but who do not want to come under Christian restraints, do not feel at home with us. There is something in the atmosphere not quite to their liking.

The church leans harder—bulks itself with more force—against all this sort of thing than it used to do. It is not because there has been so much positive and special preaching against the practices which all experience teaches are fatal to high spiritual conceptions, and to simple, consistent and increasingly beautiful spiritual characters; but somehow it has come to pass that in respect to

conformity to Christ, and non-conformity to the world, there is on the whole a healthier and safer view than once prevailed.

This means much for the future. Many of the young get their ideas of Christianity, not from a patient study of the New Testament, but from what they see in the lives of those who profess to have faith in Jesus; and the mischief that is done by worldly Christians, and especially by an aggregation of worldly Christians in a church, it is beyond anybody's power properly to weigh. A Christian church, to be good for anything, must be full of Christ.

This advance of the standard by which Christian character and conduct and duty are measured is seen in a long array of facts.

It is seen in our giving. In the condition in which the society was up to the beginning of this decade, under such constant stress to meet financial obligations, and keep all the wheels of the organization in motion, it was hardly to be expected that the contributions to benevolent objects would be very generous. But the sudden and decided advance made in gifts in aid of the Kingdom, so soon as the various objects of benevolence were placed before the people and systematically urged on their attention, showed that somewhat more might have been done, perhaps, and that there was an unconscious readiness in many hearts to do more when the opportunity should be given.

According to figures handed me by the clerk, the benevolent contributions of this church and congregation for the ten years preceding 1879, were \$8,130; while for the last ten years they have been \$82,755, or an average annual amount during this decade of a little more than ten times the average annual amount of the last decade. The lowest sum given in any one of these ten years was for the first year, or 1879, which was \$2,144. The highest was in 1884, when the figures rose to \$12,570. Last year we gave \$9,227. The year before the sum was \$10,556. This year, as some installments of the subscriptions made to the Seminary are to be paid in, I anticipate reaching the highest point yet registered in our benevolences. Of one thing it seems to me we may all be assured: the members of this church, having had such taste as they have of the joys of giving, are never again to deny themselves the privilege of being helpers with their money in the Kingdom of God. It is a satisfaction, too, to know that the giving which has characterized this church in the last few years has stimulated giving in all our

fellowship. We have done more than simply give ourselves; we have encouraged giving.

It is seen in the fidelity and fruitfulness of our Sunday School work. In the first Manual printed after my coming here, the total enrollment of officers, teachers and scholars, was put down at 636. The average attendance was given at 450. In the last Manual the whole number of officers, teachers and scholars was 1,040, while the average attendance was 728. In the Manual containing the report for 1879, there are the names of four who had united with the church; in the last one there are twenty-three names. It might not be just to make too much of this comparison, for other years, put side by side, might show a different result; but these figures show the trend. There has been a constant thought in the minds of the officers and teachers of our Home School of bringing the children and the young men and women into pronounced discipleship.

To me this has been one of the main grounds on which to substantiate the claim that our Sunday School, under its present management, is one of the best in the world, as it certainly is in my judgment. On this point it is proper for me to speak the more freely, for the reason that personally I have so little to do with the working of the School. But those in charge of these interests at the time will remember that I had not been here many months before I invited all the officers and teachers to meet at my house—then 100 Warren avenue—for prayer and consultation; and that I then put into the hands of each teacher a series of questions—a dozen or more—which I had prepared and printed, looking to the closest kind of personal work with each pupil in each class. Since that time this direct effort to lead each scholar to Christ has been a vital part of our system, and suggestions from me along this line have been less needed. It is due to all concerned to say that much of whatever success I may have had here would have been impossible without the grand work done in the Sunday School.

This advance in the standard of consecration is seen again in the Mission Work of the church. Ten years ago this church had no missions. A very enthusiastic and devoted band of young people were teaching a mission school on Oakley street, and had been doing so for a number of years. But they were in the highest state of independency. While almost all of

them—perhaps quite all—were members of the Union Park Church, they refused to admit they were a mission of the church, and the church refused to acknowledge them. Still, after a year or two of close identification on my part with the young people who were working there, the two were drawn together, and Oakley, to the advantage and joy of all concerned, became the cherished mission of the Union Park Church. The outcome is the school continued with increased efficiency, because of increased facilities, a property worth from \$12,000 to \$15,000 in which to hold the school and church services, a branch church organized with about 80 members, regular preaching, and everything moving forward toward a self-supporting church in the not distant future.

The California Avenue Church has been put on its feet. This was never in any sense a mission of ours. Yet had it not been that the Union Park Church took hold of this brave and struggling little company of believers at a critical moment in their history, and helped them with counsel and with money, they would not have been where they are now.

The Ashland Mission is another evidence of the Christian zeal and spirit of aggressiveness which many communicants in this church have come to feel. The over-crowded rooms of this mission, with its various forms of auxiliary work, with its branch church organization, and preaching regularly sustained, make clear how much has already been done; but they also make clear how much more is to be done, and done as soon as practicable, if this mission is to have a fair chance to grow, and fulfill the destiny made possible by its past achievements and present condition.

It is seen further—this elevated conception of what Christian life and aim should be—in the intelligent purpose and vigor with which large numbers of our young people have taken hold of the work of their own upbuilding in knowledge and righteousness after Christ.

One of the first meetings, outside of those regularly appointed, held by me in this church, was with a company of boys one Sunday afternoon in the church parlor. I met them, and spoke to them in common and personally, each succeeding afternoon for some time. Some of those boys, now grown to young men, are in our membership, and among the most promising advisers and workers for the future.

From this group I soon found myself drawn out into fellowship with a larger number of our young people. The question was what to do to secure their development in Christian knowledge and character. After conference, it was decided between us that, with myself for teacher, we would form ourselves into a Catechism Class, and meet once a week for recitation and instruction. In this way it came about that I was with the young people every Friday night, except vacation, for more than two years; and together we went through the entire list of questions, carefully examining them, looking at proof-texts, and modifying the answers where it seemed to be necessary, of the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly. For years afterwards, when any of the members of that class came before the Standing Committee for examination for admission to the church, we all saw the benefits of this sort of thorough and systematic training in the truths of the Scriptures.

After this, for a considerable period, the young people had a prayer-meeting by themselves on Monday evening. But the meetings were not wholly satisfactory. There was too little preparation for them by those not appointed to lead, and too little concentration, to make them wholly edifying. I watched these meetings, and was often present to give such aid as I might. But there was not enough substantial result in the way of personal improvement, nor in any way, to make a pastor feel quite easy.

Consequently, about three years ago, after a careful consideration of the methods and fruits of the Societies of Christian Endeavor, I urged our young people to organize under one of these forms. They did so, and from that day on their meetings have been profitable to themselves and to others in attendance, and there has been a steady advance on their part in the apprehension of truth and duty. Not every plan suits everybody. Not everybody whom one would like to help will consent to be helped. Parents, teachers, pastors, friends, are sometimes obliged to stand by, and look sorrowfully on, and see those whom they would gladly rescue from misery and shame, rush down to their fate. But those who ally themselves in the spirit and for the ends of Christian Endeavor, will be sure to find their vindication in the years to come in enlarged knowledge, in fitness for greater usefulness, and in better developed character.

Another fact witnessing to an advance of standard is the surprisingly large numbers of our membership who, in one form or

another, are actively engaged in pressing forward the Kingdom of our Lord. It is a common thing to hear people impatiently exclaiming that almost all the work done in any given church is done by the few, while the large majority are drones, or mere on-lookers, often not even sympathetic on-lookers. Ministers are quite as likely as anybody to join in this sort of talk. Very wide of the mark, however, would such an intimation be, if applied to the Union Park Church at the present time. Of how many other communions it may be true, it certainly is not true of this communion that a few members do all that is done.

Let any one take the Manual—the Manual itself, by the way, issued regularly every year, with its mass of information not otherwise available for the congregation in general, being one of the features of this decade, and an evidence of new life,—let any one take the Manual, and count up our various organizations, and trace out our various departments of activity, and number the persons who are set down as charged with some responsibility or duty, beginning with the Trustees, and striking down through all our societies, and boards, and committees; the Deacons, the Standing Committee, the Sunday Schools, home and mission, the Ladies' Benevolent Society, Young People's Society, Young People's Missionary Society, Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, Mission Band, Gospel Temperance League, Boys' Missionary Association, Choral Society, Industrial Schools at Oakley and at Ashland, Kitchen Garden, Special Committees on Missions, Music, Employment, Strangers, Flowers, and other interests, the Monthly Concert helpers, the Ushers, King's Daughters organized and instructed, Ladies' Prayer-meetings, Girls' Prayer-meetings, Boys' Prayer-meetings, History Classes, the men and women who give generously to all our causes,—and it will be seen at once how many hundreds there are in our fellowship who are doing something which really adds to the volume of moral influences we are sending out into this community, and the world. Besides there are large numbers of our members who are on committees, or in one way and another identified with Christian work, having a wider outlook than our own parish.

It would be a glad surprise to almost anybody to discover, as he would do by investigation, how many are doing something of real service to the Kingdom of God. There are some, it may be, doing nothing who might be doing something. There are some doing

little who might be doing more. But it would be a wrong to the Master who has put His spirit into so many hearts, and a grief to the Holy Ghost who is evidently guiding so many in their activities, not to make recognition of the large number among us who are trying to show their faith in Jesus by their works for Jesus. There are comparatively few of our members who are not rendering some specific service to the Kingdom. If this does not indicate a quickened sense of Christian responsibility and privilege it is hard to tell what would do so.

In this connection it is proper to say there is a growing feeling in our membership that we have not yet reached the highest standard of efficiency. There is no disposition to rest satisfied with past attainments, or past achievements. On the contrary, there is a wholesome discontent, because we are not accomplishing more. The conviction is a deepening one that if we do not do Christ's work here in this community,—win men to the abandonment of sin, upbuild men in righteousness, comfort men in their afflictions and troubles, help men when they are down in the hard places of life, and also aid materially in enlarging the Kingdom of God in all the earth by helping to extend a knowledge of the Saviour of mankind to all races and climes, and in this way become a positive power for the truth, then we fail in our chief justification for being. A larger proportion of our numbers every year are accepting the conclusion that the Church of Christ has been set up in the world to be the organ of the life and light of Christ to humanity, and that if it does not fulfil this mission it might as well drop out, and give place to other agencies.

It has fallen to me, during the years we have been together, to have some considerable share in the wider activities of the Church at large.

Before coming to Chicago I had preached the Annual Sermon before the American Missionary Association at Syracuse, N. Y. Within this period I have preached the Opening Sermon before the National Council at Concord, N. H.; and the Annual Sermons for the New West Education Commission at Boston, and here in this city, and for the American Home Missionary Society at Saratoga, and for the American Board at Springfield, Mass.

For six years I have been on the Provisional Committee of the National Council, and have done something, I trust, to aid in commending the Council to the churches of our order, and in making

it of service in unifying and compacting our Congregational fellowship, and pushing out to the conquest of the land for Christ.

It will always be a satisfaction to me to remember that along with my Brother Leavitt, of the Lincoln Park Church, who, so far as I am aware, was the first one to agitate in behalf of the movement, and Mr. C. F. Gates, and Professor Curtiss, I had a part in forming and organizing the Chicago City Missionary Society, and in securing the services for Superintendent of the Rev. J. C. Armstrong, who has proved himself to be so wise, so patient, so faithful, and in every way so well fitted for the position, and withal so abundantly successful.

With the New West Education Commission I was closely identified from the beginning. Up to about a year ago, when the pressure of work in all directions was so great that there seemed no course open to me, but to withdraw from active participation in its affairs, there was little done in the way of shaping general policies, or directing details, or raising money, or pushing on new work, in which I did not have some measure of responsibility. This Union Park Church, more closely than any other Church in the country, except the New England Church of this city, is linked by the chains of a vital personal interest to all the splendid assemblage of Christian Schools which have been established by our Congregational body in Utah and New Mexico, and which are doing so much, and in the years to come are still to do so much, to make these Territories intelligent and virtuous, and worthy at length of a place in our grand galaxy of Free States.

For two years I had charge of the editorial department of *The Advance*. The time has not come for a full statement of the facts in connection with the case. It is enough to say that an emergency had arisen in which it seemed to me to be worth while, so long as there was no other discernable way to accomplish the result, to assume grave risks—risks to health, risks to reputation, and risks to my standing in this pulpit, in order that the paper might be saved to the interests of our Western Congregationalism, and kept in line with the thought and life and spirit of this great section of our common country. My connection with the paper was continued longer than I anticipated. But the decision which led me into identification with it is one which I cannot regret; and I am sure the hour is coming when the members of this Church will be glad that through their Pastor they had some part in securing *The*

Advance in abiding fidelity to our denomination, and to the ideas which justify us in being a denomination.

Having said this much about outside labor, I may be allowed to add just this one word further that the work done by me beyond the limits of this parish, with hardly an exception, has been done in the interest and for the furtherance of the ends of our Congregational fellowship. Not that I have been actuated by a spirit of narrow and exclusive sectarianism, and not that I have felt any disposition to enter into unseemly rivalries with other Christian bodies; but it has seemed to me that our Congregational churches, in view of their polity and temper and intent, are entitled to the heartiest loyalty of all their members, and it has been a joy to me to do what I might to help in the accomplishment of their common objects. In my judgment it only needs somewhat more of this kind of loyalty to make the Congregational denomination one of the most potential factors in the saving of our nation, and in the evangelization of the world. The record of our past is magnificent, but the future is to shine with an increasing luster.

But whatever I may have done outside, the best that has been in me during these ten years—the substance of my life—has gone into the work of this Church. My time, my strength, my thought, my sympathies, my most energetic endeavours, have been laid on the altar of this Union Park Church. The privileges of social and literary clubs, which would have been a special delight to me, as well as a profit, I have foreborne for the sake of the young people whose meetings generally fall on the nights commonly selected by the various clubs for their exercises. I have sometimes had assistance on Sunday, and have sometimes been absent; but I can recall only five instances in the whole ten years in which I have had regular exchanges with my brother ministers. If there has been any prime to my life it has been these ten years, and these years, with all I could make them mean, have gone into the upbuilding of this Church.

It would be doing violence, both to my sense of justice and to my feelings, not to make some acknowledgments of indebtedness in connection with this service. Expression has already been given to my thought of what my obligations are to the Sunday School. But there are other helpers equally entitled to recognition.

“One man soweth, and another reapeth.” Much is due to him

whose memory is so tenderly cherished in the hearts of such large numbers of the older members of this Church—the loving and beloved Dr. Helmer, who went in and out before this people for nine years, and for ten years now has had his home with the saints on high, and has been going in and out in the presence of our Lord. He was the first regular Pastor of the Union Park Church, and his ministry still yields precious fruit.

The officers of the Church, and the heads of all our various organizations, have been uniformly kind and sympathetic in their attitude towards whatever was to be done. 'Not all have approved of everything that has been undertaken, but so far as I can recall there has never been anything to disturb in the slightest degree amicable feeling in our Board of Deacons. The relation has been delightful, and the co-operation hearty.

The Apostle said: "Help these women, for they labored with me in the Gospel." Never did a Pastor have more occasion than the Pastor of this Church has to make grateful mention of the faithful and unwearied—though often to themselves very wearying—services of the women of his flock. It has sometimes been made a matter of reproach that there are more women than men in our churches. But, if all the women in all the churches were like the women in Union Park Church, the inequality could be well endured. A more energetic, a more devout, a more self-sacrificing band of believers than these women, it would be hard to find. To the enthusiasm and fidelity and self-denial and steadfast determination manifested by the women of the Church, from the beginning until now, a debt is due which is not likely to be overestimated.

Another of these obligations is to the Church Visitor, Miss Belle M. Spence, who, ever since she has been employed by the Church to do a work which only such a person can do, has discharged her duties in a wisdom and patience and love which are above all praise. She has helped the strangers to feel at home; she has visited and aided the sick in their hours of need; she has ministered to the poor in their poverty, serving often as the golden link between the affluent and the straitened, and often dropping in on cold and hungry households like a special providence; and many are the groping souls whom she has aided in finding their way into the light of the Son of God. Not till the books are opened on high will it be known how much this one woman has done in these years of her loving service in the Union Park Church for Christ and his Kingdom.

Special and very marked assistance has been rendered in all our worship by the Organist and Choir. It is a rare thing, but it is as delightful as it is exceptional, to have the service of song conducted by skilful musicians who are also members of the Church, and in hearty accord with all reasonable efforts to secure the success of the Church. This has been, and still is our felicity. To add to our obligations in this direction, something like three years ago the young people, such of them as could sing, which proved to be a large number, organized themselves into a Chorus Choir, and under the lead of the organist, and in co-operation with the quartette, they have been present on Sunday evenings, and on special occasions to increase the attractiveness of the services. The result has been a practical revolution in our evening worship; and it only needs the same kind of steady devotion in the future which we have had in the past, to register triumphs which will gladden all hearts. It is an enviable thing to be able and willing to serve Christ in song; and nobody can quite so well appreciate the value of this service as a minister.

This special mention of persons and groups of persons to whom I feel myself indebted, might be continued much further; for it includes all who have, or have had, active participation in the affairs of the church. No minister succeeds in accomplishing the work of a church—winning souls into the faith of Christ, carrying them forward in the development of Christian character, securing money to pay debts and make permanent improvements, enlarging and keeping up general benevolences, inaugurating and pushing on mission work on a pretty wide scale, creating and sustaining a practical interest in all the great movements which look to the setting up of the Kingdom of Christ in all the earth, without the hearty co-operation of his people. Particularly is it so in this case. The record of this Ten Years in the Union Park Church has been made what it is because so many hundreds have had a mind to work. The children have helped. The boys and girls have helped. The young folks have helped. The middle-aged and the old have helped. All have helped. There has been the help of sympathy, the help of prayer, the help of counsel, the help of busy hands and errand-running feet, the help of conscientious and generous giving, the help of an enthusiastic purpose pervading nearly all hearts and minds to use our opportunities

under a sense of responsibility to God, and to make this church one of the telling forces for righteousness here in our city, in our nation, and throughout the world. With grateful heart, both to you who have so loyally sustained me in the arduous labors of the pastorate, and to Him who has fulfilled the promise of grace sufficient for our needs, and in whose strength and wisdom we have all of us gone forward unto this day, I acknowledge an indebtedness beyond any words of mine to measure. For it all God be praised.

Busy and swift and changeful years these have been. But they have been years in which it was a privilege to live and labor. Working together, something has been done by us, let us hope, which will endure when God has made the pile complete. We have seen the sunshine and the cloud. We have had experiences of joy and sorrow. Many have been born into the Kingdom here on earth. Many have been born into the Kingdom above. Fathers have gone, and mothers have gone. Husbands and wives have gone. Young men and maidens have gone. Dear sweet babes have passed out of the arms of mothers into the arms of Jesus. The probabilities are that in the ten years to come more will enter in through the gates into the City than during the ten years now completed. Many of our members are getting on into the time of the sere and yellow leaf. Jerusalem the Golden is nearer. With an increasing distinctness do its gleaming walls flash their light on our vision. Yet fear not, but forward, is the watchword. Heaven is our home. Our rest is not here—it is yonder. We can afford to toil, can we not, dear friends? even to the point of over-weariness and pain, when we know that in a little while we are to lay aside these earthly burdens, and cease from these earthly tasks, and take our places in the immortal fellowship of the redeemed on high. So we catch up the song, and the inspiration of our glad Easter hope, and press on in the confidence of an unflinching trust toward the awaiting glory of our risen and ascended Lord.





